



Arizona Registrar of Contractors

Message from Israel G. Torres, Director

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August 2005

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New online license renewal service helps contractors save time and money

Licensing Arizona contractors is one of the most fundamental and important functions at the ROC. A current license is a must for contractors to operate their businesses and with a licensed contractor community of more than 52,000 in our state, the agency is renewing nearly 2,000 licenses each month. Keeping this in mind, the ROC has worked closely with industry to streamline and improve the license renewal process, and I am pleased to announce that online renewal is now available through our Web site, www.azroc.gov.

Online license renewal offers contractors an efficient, time-saving tool that's just a click away. It provides a convenient, 24-hour service to renew licenses using the Internet. This allows contractors to renew according to their schedules, from a home or business computer, without taking time away from business to make a trip to the ROC.

The renewal process has never been easier. Contractors can use the service by visiting the ROC's website at www.azroc.gov and clicking on "Online License Renewal." The system provides easy-to-follow, on-screen instructions with prompts to enter the information needed to renew. Renewal fees are paid using a major credit card. Our online system keeps licensees' information secure and confidential and provides a clear audit trail for tax purposes.

As contractors receive their renewal packets in the mail, I encourage them to carefully review the informational brochure enclosed to learn how to use the service. A personal identification number is included, along with tips on how to take advantage of this new system. After you renew online, please take a moment to complete the online survey so the ROC can continue to improve this service and make it even more customer friendly and easy to use.

In July, the ROC tested the system and received feedback from its Industry Advisory Council as well as contractors who were part of a pre-launch test group. I'd like to thank everyone involved for their willingness to participate in the test run of the system, share suggestions and help make online license renewal a reality.

The ROC is committed to working closely with industry to introduce more convenient and efficient services so that licensees can devote time to operating their businesses and building a legacy in Arizona that we can all be proud of!

Israel G. Torres, Director

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Homeowners beware: monsoons, wildfires breed home repair scams

Summertime in Arizona always promises an interesting combination of weather-related problems: extreme heat and dryness, as well as the rain and

Investigations Update

Scam Alert for Prescott Area

8-12-05: The ROC filed a complaint with the local authorities in Prescott after Jeff Watts, an unlicensed contractor, accepted payment of more than \$1,000 to perform landscaping, concrete and paver work for an area homeowner. After taking more than half of the total payment for the job, Watts abandoned the project, which was only about 15 percent complete. He was charged with contracting and advertising without a license, and local authorities have issued a warrant for his arrest.



West Valley homeowners urged to be on the lookout

8-12-05: West Valley homeowners are urged to be on the lookout for Ray Lujan, an unlicensed contractor who has repeatedly taken money from customers without performing the work. Lujan's latest victim paid him more than \$1,300 to pour a concrete slab at her home, but he did not return to complete the job. This unlicensed contractor has 15 complaints against him and the ROC warns consumers not to do business with this individual.

Protect yourself against unlicensed contracting scams!

To report possible fraudulent home improvement activities or if you have been approached door-to-door by someone claiming to be a contractor, contact the ROC at 602-542-1525 or toll-free outside Maricopa County at 888-271-9286, or visit www.azroc.gov. Check the company's license status and report the company to the agency if you suspect a scam.

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wind of the monsoon season. Damage caused by wildfires and the monsoons serve as a magnet for unscrupulous, criminal transient contractors offering "good deals" on home repair and re-construction jobs.

In many parts of the state, the monsoons move through leaving roof, tree and other damage behind. As a result, unsuspecting homeowners often are approached by door-to-door scam artists looking to make a quick profit as they work their way through neighborhoods. These so-called contractors are usually very friendly, gain trust easily, and claim that they were just in the neighborhood to help after the storm damage and have a great price on left-over materials.

Arizona homeowners also need to be wary of these fly-by-night individuals eager to capitalize on the misfortunes of others, especially during the state's wildfire season. Homeowners should make sure they select licensed contractors for construction and repair work and to be particularly cautious when re-building after fire damage occurs.

Unfortunately, people who have suffered property losses and damages due to wildfires that sweep through their communities are particularly susceptible to unlicensed contracting fraud. Many victims have large amounts of cash in hand from their insurance settlements and are eager to get repairs or re-building completed in order to get their lives back to normal. An additional factor that may cause a homeowner to hastily hire someone who is operating illegally is that in Arizona's busy construction climate, it may be difficult to find a licensed contractor available to provide a bid and start the job right away. Knowing this, criminal transient groups often follow disasters to make quick money and usually seek painting, carpentry, roofing work and home repairs, but often will even offer to completely rebuild a house, as long as they think they can get away with it.

Be sure to check a contractor's license with the ROC before hiring anyone to perform work in your home, no matter what the circumstances are. To report suspected scams, construction fraud or to learn more about how to protect yourself against home repair scams, contact the ROC at 602-542-1525 or toll-free statewide outside Maricopa County at 888-271-9286, or visit www.azroc.gov.

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ROC year-end statistics mirror Arizona's booming construction industry

As the ROC completed its fiscal year for 2005 earlier this summer, new license applications, renewals, and unlicensed contracting complaints reflect the record-setting volume of construction in Arizona.

During the past year, the ROC received an average of 630 new contractor license applications and more than 1,400 renewals each month.

As Maricopa County took the first-place national ranking for new residential construction and other areas of the state broke records for growth, the number of licensed contractors in the state increased to more than 52,000.



The building boom also has created an opportunity for contractors not properly licensed to "step in" where there is a high demand for work. Keeping this in mind, the ROC has worked closely with neighborhoods, service clubs and senior centers to spread the word on how to report and avoid contracting scams. The agency has taken its Neighborhood Ambassador Program statewide to educate homeowners on this issue. It also conducts undercover unlicensed contracting stings and neighborhood sweeps in communities throughout Arizona to raise the public's awareness of the problem. In the past

year, the number of unlicensed contracting complaints increased about nine percent. The agency's 25 investigators worked more than 2,300 of these complaints over the course of last year.

State law requires a contractor to be licensed when performing jobs that cost \$750 or more, or for those that require a building permit. Report unlicensed contracting by calling 602-542-1525 or toll-free statewide outside of Maricopa County at 888-271-9286. To schedule a Neighborhood Ambassador Program presentation for your neighborhood or civic group, contact the ROC at the numbers above, ext. 7115.

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Project Cool Aid helps Valley families and seniors in need

This summer's temperatures, combined with a higher-than-normal level of humidity, have had tragic, deadly consequences in the desert areas of our state. As the summer heat continues, the Air Conditioning Contractors of America/Arizona Chapter (ACCA-AZ) and the ROC are providing free home cooling system repairs to homeowners in need. Through Project Cool Aid, ACCA-AZ volunteers supply free labor, supplies and equipment during their companies' busiest time of the year.



Thanks to the generosity of ACCA-AZ volunteers, over the past three years, almost 150 homeowners have received relief through Project Cool Aid.

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ROC conducts outreach programs for homeowners and contractors

In July, the ROC continued its outreach and education programs for both homeowners and contractors.

More than 60 residents in eastern Maricopa County participated in the New Homeowners' Seminar, held in Mesa on July 27. In this workshop, participants learned what to expect when moving into a newly constructed home, how to deal with questions about workmanship, and what services are available through the ROC.

In Tucson, the ROC partnered with the Alliance for Construction Trades to provide the ROC Contractors Seminars in June and July to more than 70 southern Arizona licensed contractors. The seminar provides information to contractors about how to address workmanship complaints, as well as a detailed overview of how contractors can maximize the resources provided to them by the agency.



ROC Director Israel Torres speaks with Tucson-area contractors at a recent seminar.

To learn more about either of these programs, call 602-542-1525, ext. 7405, or toll-free statewide outside Maricopa County at 888-271-9286, ext. 7405.

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Contractors invited to attend national construction licensing conference

Contractors, construction educators and regulators still have time to register for the National Association of State Contractors Licensing Agencies (NASCLA) 43rd Annual Conference, set for Sept. 27-30, 2005, in Salt Lake City, Utah.



Conference topics include the development of a national contracting trade exam, contractor / homeowner dispute resolution and liability insurance issues, among others.

To register or learn more about this year's conference, visit www.nascla.org/conference.htm or call NASCLA at 480-948-3363.

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